Plymouth Library Goes Digital

Have you been missing the cozy comfort of the Plymouth Library and Reading Room in our Center for Spiritual Growth? Now you can access digital books from our library using the Overdrive system. The new digital library is sponsored by the Plymouth Board of Spiritual Growth and funded by a competitive grant from the Plymouth Foundation.

Our new digital selections feature books on Social Justice, Spiritual Growth, Climate Concerns, and selections for Plymouth reading groups and all church reading. The collection includes fiction, nonfiction, streaming videos, audio and digital-print books. You may suggest new books on our Overdrive page or by contacting the Plymouth Library Committee: overdrive@plymouthchurch.com. Final selection decisions will be made by the Plymouth Library Committee.

To borrow books, go to plymouthchurch.overdrive.com and set up your login. You may sign up for an Instant Digital Card on your smart phone using the code puccwinter20. If you need help signing up, email the Library Committee (overdrive@plymouthchurch.com).

You may read or listen to our books on a computer, tablet, smart phone, or a digital reading device such as a Kindle or Nook. You may use several applications including Overdrive and Libby to read, listen or view. If you are a Des Moines area library Overdrive/Libby user or an Iowa Bridges reader, you may already be familiar with the system. Just sign up for a Plymouth instant card and add our church library to your library list. Our books will be checked out one at a time for 14 days and may be renewed if no one else is waiting. You may return a book early if you want to check out another book. Some books may be available to be checked out by many people at the same time.

A few of the items waiting for you to borrow:

- Boundless Compassion: Creating a Way of Life (audiobook) by Joyce Rupp
- God and the Pandemic: A Christian Reflection on the Coronavirus and Its Aftermath (audio and print) by N. T. Wright
- The Line Becomes a River: Dispatches from the Border (print) by Francisco Cantú
PLUMOUTH JUSTICE & PEACE ACTION NETWORK

Join P-JPAN, the Plymouth Justice and Peace Action Network, just in time for the 2021 legislative sessions.

The United Church of Christ, as a denomination, has had a long-standing commitment to advocating for public policies that promote healing and reconciliation in this troubled world. Plymouth Church initiated our own Justice and Peace Action Network to do this advocacy work. We advocate on issues of importance to our community on a local, state and federal level. We do not advocate for or against any political candidates or elected officials. Plymouth Church, acting through P-JPAN, asks you to help us effectively and efficiently advocate for issues important to us and to our community.

P-JPAN connects our church mission to grow in love of God and neighbor, and to practice radical love, with public policy decisions affecting us and our neighbors. We advocate for public policies, legislation, and regulations that help our community. We advocate against public policies, legislation, and regulations that harm our community.

Can you help us take action in practicing radical love for our neighbors and each other? Yes, you can!

Visit the P-JPAN sign-up on the Plymouth Church website here: plymouthchurch.com/plymouth-justice-and-peace-network-p-pan. Read through the list of issues. Check the boxes for the issues you’re interested in. Check as many or as few as you wish. Look for P-JPAN action alerts in your email inbox from time to time. Take action on those alerts by contacting specified elected officials, policymakers or by attending public meetings.

Read the P-JPAN Guide for more background information on the Justice and Peace Action Network, helpful tips on effective advocacy, and compliance with UCC non-partisan policy issue advocacy. To read the guide, visit: plymouthchurch.com/p-pan-guide-final-12-15-20

Contact P-JPAN coordinator, Alicia Claypool, with any questions, apclaypool@aol.com.

Please join us!

You are invited! The season of Lent invites us to examine our relationship with God and with each other. Join us as we explore the space we live in, both as individuals and as members of Plymouth congregation, during four Saturday morning sessions. The Center Street Story: An Urban Renewal Retrospecive is the documentary by Community Legacy Matters, LLC that we will use for our guided discussions via zoom.

Our guide will be Dr. Madison DeShay-Duncan. In addition to her doctoral work in Social and Cultural Studies and Education, Dr. DeShay-Duncan has earned an MA in Community and Regional Planning, as well as her undergraduate degree in Sociology. Her background will provide attendees with astute insight into urban renewal as it affected one local African American community.

As we examine our collective conscience, participants will seek to better understand what it means to be a neighbor, how we can build bridges across color lines, and what is the specific role for Plymouth church in this work?

Hold the dates! Mark your calendars for these four important Saturday morning sessions: March 6, 13, 20 and 27. Participation is free but limited to Plymouth church members. We hope to see you there!
Our Plymouth members all rallied around Project Memories 2.0. With little more than two week's notice, we were able to accomplish so much thanks to your help!

A wish list for 25 individuals was received from Youth Homes of Mid-America. The list of wished-for gifts from youth ages 16-18 who are served in residential programs was posted and within days, all gifts were reserved! Gifts were delivered for youth to receive at their upcoming Christmas party!

Many Plymouth members donated money to provide winter gear for students! Our final donation total was $4885! On Friday, December 18, Hubbell Elementary, Ruby Van Meter Elementary, and FOCUS/All Points Academy each received checks for just over $1628. Staff at each school started purchasing winter gear for students that afternoon!

Our HS Youth have also been busy and partnered with Project Memories 2.0! On Sunday December 12, our HS Youth gathered with gifts purchased for our friends at the MOSAIC group homes. The gifts were delivered to their front porches. Over the last three years, the HS Youth have developed a relationship with MOSAIC through the Matins Variety Show and service projects. This year, we adopted 24 adults living in three MOSAIC group homes. In pre-Covid times, the youth would normally gather in the youth room, take the wishlists to Target, purchase gifts and come back to the church to wrap and deliver.

This year, each youth signed up to adopt one adult, was given their wishlist, shopped, wrapped and delivered gifts to church on Sunday December 12. We then caravaned (in our separate vehicles) to deliver to the three homes. Although we could not visit with our MOSAIC friends due to COVID, we dropped the gifts off on their front porch, including LOVE signs and wished them a Merry Christmas through the window. It was joyous! To the right, you will see some photos from that delivery gathering.

Thank you to all who contributed to our re-imagined Project Memories 2.0! We look forward to sharing stories from our partner organizations about the impact your donations made!
This is the third and final article to introduce you to our new Strategic Plan. As I write, we are waiting for a few more appointments to the Implementation Committee but the work of Implementing the Strategic Plan will officially begin when the Committee meets on January 11.

As a reminder, the Implementation Committee will have two main tasks: work on ideas to engage the general membership with the plan and also to keep track of projects and initiatives that our Boards and Committees will lead toward its implementation. Look for updates about this work in future issues of the Contact.

For now, let’s finish our initial exploration of the Strategic Plan, Practice Radical Love Everywhere and Always. We started with Radical Love, then looked at Everywhere and Always, so let’s explore what we mean by Practice.

Practice: A Conversation Starter

If you own a copy of Marcus Borg’s The Heart of Christianity, take a look at Chapter Ten again. It’s all about Practice in the Christian context. According to Borg, Christians are really good at reminding ourselves that God loves us, but we need a little help remembering that we are also called to love God.

If we love God, we will do two things: pay attention to God and also love what God loves. Anything we do that helps us pay attention to God or to love what God loves is a Practice. So, Christians should really think of their faith as a set of practices, plural. These include the things we do on our own as well as with each other such as devotional disciplines, but also acts of kindness or justice.

If we think of Practices as something akin to exercising our bodies or learning something new, then we also understand that we won’t get it right all of the time and that there are rewards for repetition as well as for trying out new things.

So, how can we Practice Radical Love Everywhere and Always? If you’ve been doing our 7-Day Challenges, you have begun.

Finding ways to pay more attention to God and to what God loves, is a lifelong calling. The Practices that work for us today or worked for us yesterday might not be the ones we need in the future. In January, we offer a new 7-Day Challenge to help you explore new and different Practices. While you’re doing it, feel free to share your thoughts with me at kjeske@plymouthchurch.com and with each other whenever you have the chance.

We hope you’ve enjoyed these 7-Day Challenges. If you have, you’re going to love Lent at Plymouth. This year our theme will be “Practice Makes Plymouth.” We will explore the four pillars of the Strategic Plan and offer you a 40-Day Challenge to help make all of these new ideas more real for you.
A Seven-Day Challenge

1. Complete any six of these items on any six days you choose during the month of January.

- Silence is one way we can pay attention to God. Find a Practice of silence that works for you. Start with five minutes a day, experimenting with different times of the day and building the length of time to whatever feels right for you. If you want, you can do this for each of your six days.

- Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to get centered, then recite the Lord’s Prayer (our most well-known prayer) as often as you need to remind you of your love for God and your call to love what God loves.

- For inspiration about how we are called to love each other, practice saying the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis. Find this prayer to the right.

- Read Chapter Ten of The Heart of Christianity by Marcus Borg.

- Do an internet search for Dr. Martin Luther King’s Letter From a Birmingham Jail and take an hour to read it, thinking about the challenge it still poses for us today.

   Peace Prayer of Saint Francis

   Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
   where there is hatred, let me sow love;
   where there is injury, pardon;
   where there is doubt, faith;
   where there is despair, hope;
   where there is darkness, light;
   where there is sadness, joy.

   O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.

2. For the seventh day take a rest or sabbath.

   Make space for an intentional break from your work, worries, stresses, or perfectionism. Make the duration whatever length of time would feel like a true sabbath—five minutes, an hour, half a day or a whole day. Unlike God, we need to Practice rest in order to be our most loving selves.

   • Donate money or food to the Food Bank or find another organization in our community that is giving direct aid and comfort to people suffering in our community this winter.

   • Do an internet search for “Nichole Nordeman Dear Me” and listen to this beautiful song as a reminder that we all grow and change and that the ways we love God will grow and change throughout our lives as well.

   • Participate in Plymouth’s Evening Prayer Service on Facebook. This service is at 5:30 p.m. each Monday to Thursday. Let yourself be renewed in prayer and feel connected to other Plymouth members.

   • Watch your mail for a special envelope from Plymouth this month. Inside you will receive a gift of your very own Star Gift. Read the letter that comes with your Word and place your Star Gift someplace where you will see it often. See more information to the left.

   Star Gifts

   It’s the season of Epiphany and at Plymouth we will be using this season to explore different facets of Jesus’ identity—teacher, servant, healer, prophet. As we do so, it’s also an opportunity to explore who we are in the light of Christ.

   This month, you will receive a letter in the mail from Plymouth with a bookmark that will have a special word for you printed on it. We hope you receive this word as a sign and a gift that may guide you in some new way during the season of Epiphany and maybe for all of 2021.

   Place it where you will see it often, write it down in the places where you want to encounter it, and let it work with you.

   Throughout this season and beyond we will encourage you to engage with this word and maybe to share it within the Plymouth community.

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ONLINE WEEKLY OFFERINGS

During this closer, we have many virtual offerings available to you throughout the week on a variety of platforms! Email, Facebook Live, Zoom, and YouTube. On this page, you will find a list of all of our regular weekly offerings during the month of January!

If you would like to receive our email offerings on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, all you need to do is subscribe! To subscribe, visit: eepurl.com/dhGrYv, and fill out the form with your first and last name and email address.

SATURDAYS...

Communion Saturday
Beginning January 9, join us each Saturday, except the first Saturday of the month, on Zoom at 5 p.m. We will gather to take Communion together and have a short time of fellowship. To join us, visit the Plymouth website, scroll down to “Join Us for Online Worship” and click “Saturday Communion.”

Weekend Worship Service
Our Weekend Worship Service will be available beginning at 5:30 p.m. on our Facebook Page each weekend.

SUNDAYS...

Weekend Worship Service
Our Weekend Worship Service will be available beginning at 9 a.m. on our YouTube Channel each weekend.

Blob of Blessing
In January, join us on Zoom at 11 a.m. for our virtual Blob of Blessing. See blessing schedule below. For the Zoom link to join, visit the Plymouth website, click Events and look for “Blob of Blessing.”

Jan. 10: Public servants (lawyers, judges, politicians, city, county, state, etc.)
Jan. 17: Educators (teachers, child-care providers, administrators, etc.)
Jan. 24: Essential workers (service industry, post office, DOT, grocery store, janitorial staff, sanitation, etc.)
Jan. 31: Healthcare & First responders (doctors, nurses, EMT, Fire, Police, etc.)

Fellowship Forum
Sunday morning at 10 a.m. join us for our weekly conversation about God, life and whatever happens to come up. To join the conversation, visit the Plymouth website, scroll down to “Join Us for Online Worship” and click “Fellowship Forum.”

STAY IN TOUCH!

We want to stay connected! Below, you will find links for easy access to our website, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube Channel.

• plymouthchurch.com
• facebook.com/PlymouthChurch
• instagram.com/PlymouthChurch
• YouTube Channel: PlymouthChurch DSM
CURRENT HAPPENINGS

PLYMOUTH NURSERY SCHOOL 2021-2022

Plymouth Nursery School offers high quality half-day preschool classes for children aged 2-5 right here at Plymouth Church! We also offer an extended day option for children who are 4 ½ or 5. The registration date for the 2021-2022 school year is fast approaching. As a Plymouth Church member, you have the opportunity to take advantage of our priority registration process which begins Tuesday, January 12, starting at 7 p.m. Detailed information about our classes and the registration process can be found on our website, plymouthnurseryschool.org. Contact Jan Van Wyk at 255-3271 or jvanwyk@plymouthchurch.com with questions.

JANUARY BOOK STUDY

Plymouth’s Welcoming Migrant Committee and Faithful Readers will join together, along with any interested Plymouth members for a book study January 21 and 28. We will read The Line Becomes a River: Dispatches from the Border by Francisco Cantu, and will meet by Zoom. Books will be made available for $10. and can be purchased by contacting Mary Nelson (maryandsteve@q.com). The author was raised in the southwest and became a Border Patrol agent, but ultimately left as he became aware of the dehumanization and violence. His is a memoir with knowledge of both sides of this complicated and harrowing human struggle. The book was a Top 10 Book of 2018 from NPR and the Washington Post.

STEWARDSHIP 2020-2021 UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who submitted their pledge for 2020. As of December 18, we had processed 516 pledges for a total of $1.45 million. While this falls short of our goal (554 pledges and $1.7 million), we understand that this has been a difficult year financially for many people and we are very happy that our members continue to include Plymouth in their giving. As we move into 2021 and work to implement our new long-term strategic plan, your contributions are more important than ever. If you have not yet returned a pledge card or submitted your pledge online, we encourage you to do so. You can pledge online here: plymouthchurch.com/give. The information we receive on these pledge cards is crucial input to our budgeting process. We look forward to providing a more detailed report on our stewardship results in February. The Plymouth Board of Christian Stewardship and all of our Plymouth ministers and staff thank you for your support.

DISCOVER PLYMOUTH 2.0

Do you or someone you know want to become a member of Plymouth Church? Have you been worshiping with us for a while and are feeling ready to make it official? Have you participated online during the pandemic and are interested in learning more about us?

Discover Plymouth 2.0 will be launching in early 2021! If you are ready to join Plymouth Church or are just interested in learning more, please visit: plymouthchurch.com/news/discover-plymouth-january-2021.

STEPHEN MINISTRY

Stephen Ministers are trained members of Plymouth Church, who are available to help bring a spiritual presence in your life through caring, listening, and prayer. Contact LeAnn Stubbs at 515.255.3149 to discuss having a Stephen Minister assigned to walk with you.

PLYMOUTH WOMEN’S SCHOLARSHIPS

The Board of Plymouth Women Scholarship Committee will award scholarships in the spring of 2021 to college students who are preparing for a career in service. The estates of Susan B. Turner, Opal Jordan, and Mary and Frederick Royal fund these scholarships. Visit plymouthchurch.com/news/2021-scholarship for a link to a fillable-form PDF of the application. Please fill out the application and submit it to jonandlisa@mail.com by March 31, 2021.

PLYMOUTH GALLERY

Coming to the Plymouth Gallery in January will be an exhibit from Mark Marturello! Stay tuned for more information when the exhibit will be installed. To learn more about Mark and see some of his work, visit: marturello.com/about.

THANKSGIVING OFFERING UPDATE

The Board of Benevolences wishes to thank everyone who contributed to the 2020 Thanksgiving Special Offering. The offering provides important subsidies to support the work of two vital programs. Food Buddies provides weekend meals to more than 40 families at Hubbell Elementary in Des Moines. When in-person school resumes, the number of food-insecure families is expected to grow due to the hardships of the pandemic. Family Promise of Greater Des Moines will use offering funds to purchase cleaning and laundry supplies and meals and to pay for the salaries of some staff who work at the Day Center, a safe and secure place for families experiencing homelessness.

VOLUNTEER EMAIL LIST

Each Friday we send an email to a list of members with current volunteer opportunities we have available at Plymouth. By subscribing, you will hear from us each Friday with details even if there aren’t currently any volunteers needed, we will continue to email each Friday to let you know. Sign up here: eepurl.com/heSU4b.

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For more information about Plymouth Church, please scan this code to visit our website at www.plymouthchurch.com, follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/plymouthchurch and Instagram @PlymouthChurch. If you are not able to visit on Sunday, a podcast of a portion of the previous week’s service featuring the sermon is available on iTunes, or on the Plymouth website under Resources/Sermon Podcasts. Print copies of most sermons may be downloaded from the website at Resources/Sermon Library.

To submit information for the Contact, email Cindy Eaton-Eklund, ceaton@plymouthchurch.com

Plymouth Church Program Staff

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Lindsey Braun ................................. Minister of Vitality and Outreach
Mary Kate Buchanan ................................. Associate Minister
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Christopher Goodson .................. Director of Music and Fine Arts
Carl Gravander ........................................... Organist
Karen Quance Jeske .......................... Director of TiM Programs
Rushing Kimball .............................. Associate Minister
LeAnn Stubbs ......................................... Minister of Care and Welcome
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